



US CHESS
FEDERATION

US CHESS
GUIDELINES
FOR
**ACCESSIBLE
CHESS
EVENTS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Living Document is intended to communicate guidelines, best practices, and resources to help the Tournament Organizer (TO) and the Tournament Director (TD) create increasingly accessible, inclusive, and fair environments for individuals of all abilities in all types of events. It is also a guide for those TOs who seek to run events that are classified with the Accessible tournament label (A) in their Tournament Life Announcements (TLA). Players with disabilities may find this document helpful when asking for reasonable and fair accommodations and for understanding how those accommodations may be carried out.

These guidelines have been specifically developed by members of the Accessibility and Special Circumstances Committee (ASCC) and reviewed by the US Chess Executive Board. They reflect current best practices for holding Accessible chess tournaments which successfully include players who have chronic disabilities, temporary impairments, and/or specific circumstances that may require particular supports, adaptations, or accommodations in order to make chess play available for all players without fundamentally altering the nature of the chess tournaments.

An Accessible event is one that is safe, comfortable, dignified, and fair for players of all abilities. Beyond environmental adaptations required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the event would facilitate and encourage people with disabilities to ask for reasonable accommodations, in a timely manner, in order to remove any barriers that may block inclusion. The responsibility of making these accommodations belongs to members of the chess society “at large,” in this case, the TO, TDs, and all other tournament staff and volunteers. (Goering)

If an event is labeled Accessible by the US Chess in a TLA or elsewhere, it is understood that the TO is providing a physically accessible venue, safe conditions, appropriate adaptations to equipment, and accommodations for players as needed. To achieve the optimal support plans for players with unique accommodation needs, in addition to consulting with the player, a player’s family members, caregivers, and coaches may be included in the development of creative, individualized strategies. The subsequent General Guidelines present suggestions for successfully facilitating any US Chess rated, non-rated, and sponsored event for all players. A large component of being an Accessible tournament is gathering information before the start of the tournament to help the TO run a smooth event.

On Language: Given that there are regional and personal variations in the acceptance of preferred terminology and etiquette (United Spinal Association), some of the terminology used in this document may be considered out of date or offensive by some. Accessibility language and word choices will be continually updated as the writers become aware of better and more up-to-date terms.

II. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Accessible events must include a venue with fully accessible playing areas and restrooms, as defined by local, state and ADA requirements (ADA), as well as have specific areas designated for refreshments and skittles. If a different section of the tournament site (possibly removed from the main event) is required for a player's full participation, a best effort should be made to have a TD or assigned tournament staff member in the same accessible room for the entirety of each game. Additionally, Accessibility Liaisons (AL), and/or Game Assistants (GA) may be necessary depending on the specific needs of the player. Both roles are described more thoroughly in Section IV of the *Guidelines* and in "The Organizers Toolkit" (Chapter 1.)
Note: "The Organizer's Toolkit" is not yet available. When it is, it will be part of this document. It is referred to from here on out as "OT."
2. A registration form should be available for use when players are signing up to play in an Accessible tournament. This form includes a section in which the competitor can tell the TO about any accommodations, including any equipment adaptations a player might need.
3. All sensitive personal identifying information (PII) collected from players must be kept confidential by the TO and the Chief TD. However, any accommodations requested may be shared as deemed necessary with tournament staff in a preliminary informational meeting (See Section II, #3). Certain aspects of an accommodation may also be shared with an opponent in order to ensure understanding, cooperation and fairness in the game. Sensitive Personal Identifying Information (PII) is defined as information that if lost, compromised, or disclosed could result in substantial harm, embarrassment, inconvenience, or unfairness to an individual. (Northeastern University, 2019)
4. Online advertisements or printed flyers issued by the TO should include a statement to attendees as to the availability of accommodations for the event so that the attendees will know how and when to make their requests for accommodations. For example, the statement could state "Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Include a description of the accommodation(s) you will need, including as much detail as you can. Also, please include your contact information if we need to contact you for more information. Last-minute requests will be accepted but may be impossible to grant. Send an e-mail to (ADDRESS HERE) or call (PHONE HERE)." All relevant accessibility information should be available upon request from the TO via email, phone, and at the registration area before the start of the event. This may include maps of the venue showing the location of accessible restrooms, refreshments, skittles areas, first aid stations, safety devices, and emergency exits.
5. No player shall be penalized, in accordance with the Laws of Chess, because of his/her disability or for requesting an accommodation to the mode of play if this adjustment is deemed fair by the Chief TD. Moreover, no player shall be penalized while they are acting under an emergency, including using their electronic devices to call 911.

6. While it is recommended that accommodations are requested in advance, as with any walk-in/on site registrations, TO/TDs are expected to do their best to make adjustments. With adequate time before the start of a round, a competitor or team may request reasonable accommodations. Other requested accommodations may require more lead time will not be able to be provided without said lead time, e.g. an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. (ADA) The TO may assign one of the staff members or volunteers to be an AL (see Section IV for more information) to ensure that the needs of the player with accommodations, as well as those of the opponent, are always considered.
7. An AL should ensure that appropriate accommodations are correctly made before each round of the tournament and that each GA understands their assigned duties and assigned board or boards. Ideally, an AL should be a certified US Chess TD who is familiar with these guidelines, and/or someone who has received additional US Chess accessibility training, once that training becomes available. An AL supports all tournament staff in running the tournament more smoothly and with sensitivity for all players. If the player requesting the accommodation of a GA or AL and they have a volunteer that is able to perform the duties competently, the TO may enlist that person's help (especially in circumstances where a TD cannot reasonably be spared).¹
8. For all chess tournaments, not just those considered Accessible, TOs are encouraged to consult the venue for an existing Emergency Action Plan that identifies a point person in charge of executing this plan, including when to call 911, and one that describes proactive safety measures, such as delineating the locations of a first aid station.
9. Players, parents, coaches, TOs, TDs, tournament staff, and volunteers are encouraged to send questions regarding the guidelines, give feedback, and provide anecdotal stories to the US Chess Senior Director of Strategic Communication, Dan Lucas, at dlucas@uschess.org. This can be helpful prior to an event, and after an event by sharing success stories with others, as well as providing suggestions for improving the guidelines. The OT appendix to these Guidelines provides procedures, tools, and checklists to assist TOs and TDs in following these guidelines. In addition, it includes the following:

¹ If no AL is available, each GA may be required to coordinate with both the player and tournament staff to determine what specific supports or accommodations need to be made for the assigned player or players. Accommodations may include, but not be limited to, being a scribe or making moves on a designated board. For example, The OT, Chapter 2, includes a checklist with questions such as, "Is the chair pulled away to make room for a wheelchair?", or "Is there additional lighting placed on the board for a player who requires more light?" Individuals seeking to participate as AL and GA should be screened before the event to inform them verbally and in writing of the requirements of each respective role, determine whether he or she can be calm and thoughtful in highly stressful situations and be able to manage anxiety that may arise from the prospective volunteer opportunity, and determine whether he or she can be welcoming and inclusive to people of all abilities. A TO may provide sensitivity training programs concerning accessibility to the AL and GA. Educational resources may be obtained from pertinent not-for-profit organizations in the area, whether through written resources or in-person instruction.

- A list of questions for potential staff and volunteers to elicit whether the accessibility team can comfortably work with all players, and specifically, to determine that they are not resistant to working with people who have a variety of needs. (See *Toolkit* Chapter 2. This chapter discusses where TDs can and can't talk about a player or his/her needs.)
- A list of US Chess rules that can be specifically applied to players with disabilities (e.g. *US Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess*, Rule #15 regarding who can offer draws)
- A set of stickers to denote approval of verified medically required electronic devices. These can be put on score sheets or another visible place that is not actually on the device. (See OT, Chapter 5)
- A list of "Do's and Do not's for TDs, GA, AL, and volunteers. This can be found in the Accessibility Guidelines Toolkit.
- An example of an announcement stating that any player, with a personal caregiver, will not talk about his/her chess game with that caregiver or anyone else.
- Letter to send to all tournament registrants: Protecting Children From Known Allergens. (Including: Make sure to remind your child of what they can/can't eat or be near. No sharing food.) (See OT, Chapter 3)
- Official badges to designate personal caregivers.

III. ORGANIZATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TOURNAMENT HALL

1. Players with and without accommodation needs should ideally play together in one common area, providing a standard, dignified, non-segregated space. Specific board assignments should be considered before the first round with ample space given at each table, and determined on a case-by-case basis, for the player and potentially the GA, e.g. scribe, interpreter, etc.
2. The spirit of these guidelines is to integrate all players into the event, regardless of individual circumstances. US Chess and the ASCC recognize the challenge this could present when holding a tournament with multiple sections and schedules. Therefore, the following are three possible suggestions:
 - Arrange at least one-third of the total playing area so that corridors between the rows and aisles are large enough to accommodate wheelchairs, walkers, and/or other adaptive equipment.
 - If requested by the player, assign the board of a player with physical accommodation needs, such as requiring a certain table height, or needing room for a wheelchair, to a fixed area, perhaps at the end of a row within or closest to the player's section. Pairing TDs should keep some "end-of-row" board numbers in each section open for this purpose to ensure consistency during the pairing process of each round.
 - For even more specificity, try to assign a specific board number to each player who warrants such accommodations, so that the board number is in the same place throughout the entire tournament, if possible. This should be in the main playing area, and not in a separate section or different room. Generally, when this is done, the board number assigned is at the end of a table making it easier for the player to get in and out of the event space.
3. TDs must read the *Accessibility Guidelines* and "The Organizers Toolkit" before working at an "A" labeled event. TDs must be readily accessible to, and available for all players, especially at the start of each round.
4. The Chief TD and/or AL should convene an informational meeting to inform all tournament staff, volunteers, and GA about the specific accommodation needs of certain players, without discussing any protected, sensitive medical information. This meeting can be held on-site prior to the event, or via email before the event. Additionally, best practices for the provision of optimum accessibility for all players, introductions of assigned AL, GA, and TD staff, and any other pertinent information should be provided. This meeting should not readily include sensitive PII, as specific details of accommodation needs should only be discussed on a "need to know" basis.

IV. ACCESSIBILITY LIAISONS, GAME ASSISTANTS AND PERSONAL ASSISTANTS

1. An Accessibility Liaison (AL) is a specially trained Tournament Director who supports and works with the TO, either as a paid or volunteer staff member. Their sole responsibility is to manage the inclusion of players with accommodation and accessibility needs. The AL works under the Chief TD to manage the GA to ensure that the pre-planned and “on the spot,” reasonable accommodations happen throughout each round. Job responsibilities include making sure chairs are pulled out, placement of the board is correct for the specific player, communicating with the TO and TD as needed, and making sure that players who need an accommodation have a point person. The player requesting this accommodation may submit a name(s) to the TO for consideration. This may be necessary if the tournament staff are stretched thin due to unexpected high turnout.
2. Game Assistants (GA) are staff or volunteers working for the Organizer who are specifically assigned to one or more boards or players who need and have requested specific types of accommodations, throughout the tournament game, e.g. notating for the player. The GA do not have TD powers unless they themselves are TDs as well and are working as a TD at the event. GA, who are not also TDs, report to the AL, and importantly not to the coach or family member. GA should be held to the same strict rules for cell phone use as players. The player requesting this accommodation may submit a name(s) to the TO for consideration. This may be necessary if the tournament staff are stretched thin due to unexpected high turnout.
3. Personal Care Assistants (PCA) are not provided by the TO or TDs. This is a person who reports directly to the chess player, the coach, or the family of the chess player. All costs associated with the PCA are not the responsibility of US Chess or the tournament staff. The PCA does not typically sit at the board but must be readily available. Exceptions to this guideline should be discussed with the TO. The PCA must sign an agreement stating that they will not discuss matters pertaining to chess during an active game. (See OT, Chapter 3) for a sample agreement. When a player is in need of personal assistance, e.g., going to the bathroom, or eating a snack, and the player needs to leave the room, the assigned GA should seek out the player’s PCA and accompany the player and caregiver to ensure that only pertinent, non-chess related discussions are held. GA should be present at any interactions involving a player engaged in an active game or if it is not possible, e.g. sensitive situations, the GA should remind the PCA about the “no chess talk” agreement. For liability reasons, tournament staff and volunteers may only help with the support of the actual game and not with personal care. A specified sitting area inside the tournament shall be designated for PCA so that they can be located quickly. Additionally, a special access badge should be issued to PCA. If determined to be medically necessary, PCA may keep their phones on in silent mode. GA should have at least a minimum knowledge of the Rules of Chess, including how pieces move, how to take algebraic notation, what to do when either player has a claim, when and how to pause a clock, the appropriateness of borrowing an opponent’s score book,

reporting of game results, and how to appeal a decision. Consider reviewing the Rules of Chess with GA before the event during the training described in Part II of these Guidelines.

4. An assigned GA allows a fair game and is not there to give an individual player an advantage. GA need to be advised not to interfere with the game, and what situations require TD intervention. The players, regardless of need for an accommodation/adaptation, must know the rules of chess themselves. For example: It is okay for a player to ask the GA to get the TD to make a ruling. However, if a GA is asked by a player for advice on any game, the GA must call over a TD in case a penalty may be considered. If necessary, draw offers or claims can be given via the GA (US Chess Rule #15).
5. If a player is displaying mildly disruptive behavior such as rocking or yelling, the GA must be sensitive to both players. The GA cannot tell the assigned player what to do next in the game or to resign. However, the GA can try to calm the assigned player, thereby de-escalating the distraction for the opponent, as well. If the disruptive behavior starts to escalate, the GA should call over a TD who will handle the situation according to the rules keeping in mind equity for the players involved and those around them.
6. If necessary, draw offers or claims may be given via the assistant. See Rule 15. (US Chess) TOs and Chief TDs may determine what specific rules apply to the GA, AL, and PCA.
7. If a GA has observed that the opponent of the player requesting an accommodation seems uncomfortable and/or is not given fair conditions, the GA should seek out a TO or TD to help resolve the situation. Essentially, the GA is assigned to not only the player with requesting accommodations, but to the game itself and the two involved players; the GA must remain impartial and be proactive in maintaining safe and fair conditions for both players.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOME COMMONLY OBSERVED SITUATIONS

1. Players who have Allergies (with/without serious allergic reactions)
 - Little or no signs may be observable prior to an allergic reaction.
 - If the player with allergies is in contact with specific irritants that cause an allergic reaction, symptoms can be life-threatening.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Players are encouraged to tell organizers about any severe allergies. On the registration form, ask if players have any severe allergies.
 - TO are encouraged to keep a “No Nuts,” “No Peanuts” policy around the playing area.
 - If a player registration form comes back with a severe allergy, the TO should email all registered players “Please do not bring snacks with _____ to this tournament.” (Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America)²
2. Players who have Alzheimer’s and other Dementias
 - Alzheimer’s affects people differently. Not everyone has the same needs or requires the same accommodations at the same stage of the disease. (Alzheimer’s Association)
 - Learn more about Alzheimer’s at: “the warning signs of Alzheimer’s” from https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/10_signs

SUGGESTIONS:

- If you are organizing a tournament specifically for players who have Alzheimer’s, arrange the start time to be earlier in the day.
 - Have a brightly-lit room.
 - If possible, allow players requesting accommodation(s) and related GA to come in early, have time to settle in, and get acclimated to their surroundings before the rush of players enter the main hall.
 - Remain patient and thoughtful in explaining rules and procedures.
 - Seat player(s) at same board every round. (See Section III, 1.b-c)
 - Offer help with scoring/writing moves, e.g., GA. (See Section IV, 2.)
3. Players who have Asthma
 - Breathing can be heavier and harder than usual.
 - Player may have one or more of the following symptoms: persistent cough, wheezing, runny nose, sore throat, or watery eyes. (Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America)

SUGGESTIONS:

- Players with inhalers for their asthma conditions should be allowed to carry and use their inhalers.
- Assign the player to a board placed further away from other players with strong perfumes or odor and/or further away from the entrance of the playing area.
- In a medical emergency, either player should pause the clock, get the attention of a TD and ask that 911 be called immediately.

² You can only be concerned with allergies you can control for such as peanuts in the playing hall or whether or not your food vendor is offering stuff with coconut in it, etc. You cannot control for sawdust from construction, ragweed in the air, etc.

- Encourage players to reach out to the TDs or TO if their condition worsens.
 - Encourage players to notify their opponent and/or the floor TDs prior to the game that they may have to use their inhaler.
4. Players who have Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
- Limited or no verbal communication ability may be observable.
 - Repetitive behaviors such as hand flapping, spinning, or rocking might be seen.
 - Parent/caregiver makes TD aware that the player has an ASD. (Autism Society)

SUGGESTIONS:

- Ensure that the player understands the rules and explain any game or environmental boundaries.
 - Follow a pre-existing, brief, written behavioral contract including expected behavior during the tournament; if challenges arise, remind the player of their prior commitment to follow the rules of chess, as well as to fulfill the contract he/she agreed to.
 - Before the tournament starts, talk with parent, coach, or PCA about communication practices. If necessary, during the game, seek help from the parent, coach, or PCA.
 - If a player exhibits highly disruptive behavior, do not touch the player. Call for a TD immediately. The TD will likely remove the player, special needs or not, from the tournament, with just cause. The goal is to provide a safe environment for all. If someone is making the environment unsafe, they need to leave to restore the environmental safety standards. The role of the GA is to call over the TD, and to quietly ask the opponent if s/he is okay.
5. Players with Biological Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS)
- This includes players with glucose monitors, blood pressure monitors, and any other medically necessary electronic device.
 - It is important that the player notifies the TO or TD prior to the event, so that the device can be marked approved for that tournament, e.g., with a sticker on their score sheet.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Cell phones used for medical purposes cannot be prohibited.
 - Inspection of device is essential to ensure there are no chess apps running.
 - Players should not be penalized if their phone alerts them. Ask the player to place the phone on silent alert mode (e.g. vibration mode) if the health app is able to override “silent mode” for medical emergency alerts.
6. Players with Cognitive Impairments (temporary or permanent)
- The player might require more time to fully understand directions and rules.
 - Information about the particular special circumstances or needs should be provided to the TO or TD, before the event begins.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Remain patient and thoughtful in explaining rules and procedures.
- Ask if a location with decreased distractions would be beneficial.

7. Players displaying disruptive behaviors (might be related to Autism, ADHD, PTSD, Tourette's Syndrome)
 - The player may be unable to handle loss or unexpected situations and exhibit notable disruptive behavior. Other acts that might be considered violent may result in immediate forfeiture from the tournament.
 - Player might “turn inward,” exhibiting “curling up,” going under the table, rocking, may not want to leave the board, but won't make a move on the board, etc.
 - Players may express that they regularly use a “fidget” device in school.

SUGGESTIONS:

- If the player's disruptive behavior is endangering the safety of self or others, respectfully remove the player from the playing hall and possibly from the tournament.
 - If the game is still in session, pause the clock while assisting to de-escalate the situation.
 - Communicate what is happening with the parents or coach as soon as possible.
 - Work with the parent and coach to find the most ideal conditions to continue if it does not put the opponent at a disadvantage.
 - If one of the players already has a clear behavior plan/agreement from a healthcare professional which has been shared with the organizers and TDs, incorporate this plan into the tournament when appropriate.
 - With less severe behavior, communicate clearly that this behavior is not acceptable, that the player is exhibiting bad sportsmanship, and try to work with the player and his/her family to lessen the problematic behavior.
 - “Fidget” devices (e.g., squeeze balls, paper clips) that are presented to the TD before the start of the game, and which are determined to be non-distracting, may be allowed on an individual basis.
8. Players with Dyslexia or Dysgraphia
 - When a player provides documentation of a processing disorder such as dyslexia or dysgraphia, they can request a GA to take notation. It is important that the player notifies the TO or TD prior to the event, so that a GA can be brought in. (International Dyslexia Association)

SUGGESTIONS:

- The assigned GA should be a non-biased notation taker for the duration of the tournament.
 - A player should announce a move, make the move, and the trained assistant can then record the move.
 - Providing ample space for the GA who is taking verbal notation can reduce possible distractions to the neighboring boards.
 - Make sure the GA is trained to provide NO intervention in games, specifically not to correct moves, but instead, simply writing down the moves that are voiced.
9. Players with Fine/Gross Motor Needs
 - The player may exhibit difficulty in moving pieces, holding a pencil, or pressing the clock.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Players, family members, and coaches should be proactive and communicate before the tournament
- If the limitation of motoric movements prevents the ability to press the clock, notate, and move pieces independently, assign a GA.

10. Players with Noise Sensitivity

- Players with documented sensitivity to noise levels that might not bother others or even be noticeable to others. (Web MD) (Star Institute for Sensory Processing Disorder)

SUGGESTIONS:

- Move the player's board to a quiet corner of the playing venue, or perhaps an unused row of tables.
- If running a FIDE-rated event or section, variation to the electronic devices rule should be announced, such that it allows unconnected electronic noise cancellation devices to be used.
- Allow headsets and ear plugs that do not cancel out fire safety alarms. **NOTE:** In most cases, ear plugs are the solution here. There are no rules against ear plugs and any noise that gets past the ear plugs is generally going to be disruptive to others too, and will be dealt with under the normal rules.

11. Players with documented, Non-Visible Conditions (such as Anxiety Disorders, Epilepsy, Diabetes, PTSD, Panic Disorder, Phobia-related conditions, etc.)

- There are typically no indicators prior to a medical crisis. One is unable to "see" the condition/disability. However, because these are medically documented conditions, proof may be requested.
- Information about the particular special circumstances or needs should be provided to the TO or TD before the event begins. TO/TDs are encouraged to offer an opportunity to discuss what accommodations can be offered, since the player may need more time to articulate their needs.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Suggestions from the other mentioned categories may be applicable here
 - Remain patient and thoughtful in explaining rules and procedures.
 - Seat player at same board every round. (See Section III, 1.b-c)
- Encourage players to reach out to the tournament directors or TO if their condition worsens.
- Offer help with scoring/writing moves, e.g., GA. (See Section IV, 2.)
- Communicate what is happening with the parents or coach as soon as possible.
- Work with the parent and coach to find the most ideal conditions to continue, if it does not put the opponent at a disadvantage.
- Inform the player of his/her rights, what's OK and what's not OK, e.g. walking, frequent trips to the bathroom, etc.

12. Players Who Have Service Dogs

- Only service dogs are allowed in the playing hall. A service animal can only be a dog. (ADA)

- Therapy and Emotional Support animals are not allowed in the playing hall, but may be allowed in the waiting areas if permitted at the venue.
- Owners should be proactive and relay the information in advance that a service dog will be brought to the venue.

INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICE ANIMALS:

- TDs and TOs can ask the dog owners to explain the presence of the dog. Although it is illegal to ask why a service dog is needed for a particular person, it is legal to ask what functions or services the dog performs. It is not illegal to ask for the certification card/paperwork. Please note that there is no national registry of official service dogs. There are five things that a service dog can be trained for: Blindness, deafness, diabetes/seizures, pushing buttons/other manual jobs, and PTSD/ASD.
- Many service dogs wear vests and/or carry identification, however it is not required that they do so. Some dogs are in a special collar or have other handler-working dog cues. Any handler of a working dog can tell you what they use to cue the dog as to whether it is “working” or “at rest.”
- Refusing service and/or being rude to a service dog and handler is not only unprofessional behavior, but it is illegal at both state and federal levels.
- An announcement in the playing area should be made about the presence of the service dog before round one so anyone who may be allergic to it is alerted. Should someone who has a dog phobia or is allergic to dogs be paired against a player with a service dog, accommodations will be made to ensure a fair game for BOTH players. GA can be assigned to make the moves for the players, should they need to be in separate rooms.
- You may exclude any service dog from the main playing area only if that dog’s behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. If the dog poses a direct threat to the opponent, another area can be used for the player who has a service animal or the opponent.
- Those in attendance should be advised against petting or otherwise interacting with a service dog while it is working.

13. Players with Temporary Disabilities

- Some examples include: Concussion, broken bone, migraine, eye conditions.

SUGGESTIONS:

- It is important to take temporary disabilities seriously. TOs and TDs are responsible for making players comfortable and for providing fair conditions, such as providing an extra chair to elevate a broken leg.

VI. EDUCATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LARGER, COMMUNITY GROUPS

1. Blind Players

SUGGESTIONS:

- Braille boards, braille pieces and braille clocks are legal and preferred. Using braille-specific equipment takes precedence over all other legal boards, sets, and clocks for games played by blind or low-vision players. Sighted players may transfer moves to a second board.
- Setup: be prepared to give enough space for multiple boards for any game that has one or two blind players. One six-foot table should be enough.
- Providing more space between a game with moves that are verbalized for notation-scribing will reduce distractions to the surrounding players and games.
- Pre-tournament communication is very important: How to access the venue, how to find the playing hall, how to orient towards the bathroom, etc.
- Pre-round communication is also very important: Pairings and color assignment need to be communicated to the blind player aloud.
- Blind or visually impaired chess players should ideally be offered the choice of sitting at the same seat/table for all rounds. This helps the player stay physically oriented. They can then more easily navigate around the playing hall, access the restroom, or access the designated refreshments area as needed. If possible, the same GA should remain in service to a blind or visually impaired player for the entire tournament. This increases familiarity and appropriate and consistent accommodations for the player.
- One GA per board is typically enough.
- GA for blind players should inform the player if they need to leave the chess board or the playing area temporarily. If necessary, a substitute should be offered to minimize loss of time.
- If a competitor is unable to press his own clock or move his own pieces, a non-biased GA shall be provided. This assistant should be requested in advance so that the TO has time to locate the appropriate personnel.
- Specific US Chess rules for blind players: 35F10. (Further part of this paragraph is still under construction.)

2. Deaf Players

- D/deaf: People who are Deaf, with a capital “D,” identify themselves as part of a community. American Deaf chess players often use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language. Deaf chess players from other countries will use the sign language of their home country. Some Deaf people, but not all, can read lips. Some, but not all, can read/write English fluently. (National Institute of Health and Human Services National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders)
- People who are deaf, with a lowercase “d,” do not use ASL as a primary language. They rely on cochlear implants, hearing aids, writing, and other assistive means to communicate. Even with their devices, they still do not hear as well as a person with full hearing.
- D/deaf chess players:
 - Cannot hear the instructions.
 - Cannot hear their opponents.
 - Cannot hear sirens/alarms.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Provide a certified interpreter if pre-requested. The TO is responsible for paying for the interpreter, by law. (ADA) Do not expect or ask a family member, a person who knows a little sign language, or a “friend” to interpret for the player. See <https://rid.org/> for more information on how to hire a certified interpreter. See the Organizer’s Toolkit for more information.
- Send pairings and instructions to their “phones.” Most D/deaf people have a phone-like, texting device.
- Have printed instructions available to be picked up at the registration desk. The instructions should include where the bathrooms are, all rules and policies, round times, where to record results, and anything else you will be having announced.
- Have a TD stand near the board at the beginning of the round to assist with getting the game started on time if needed.
- With D/deaf players, face the D/deaf player and make an effort to speak clearly so that the d/Deaf player can see the lips of the tournament director who is speaking to him/her. If you are talking and looking away or down, the D/deaf player cannot see your lips moving.
- Do not forfeit a D/deaf person for using a notepad for communication.
- When trying to get the attention of a d/Deaf player, tap lightly on the shoulder. Do not call out to them.
- Do not ask a D/deaf person to remove hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Ask the D/deaf person if and what accommodations s/he needs or wants. Deaf players often don’t want anything “special.” If they say they don’t need anything, don’t argue with them. They know best what they need.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- FIDE’s “Guidelines on treatment of disabled chess players” with the express permission from the FIDE DIS Committee Chair, GM Thomas Luther
- American Alzheimer’s Association
- United Spinal Organization’s Disability Etiquette booklet
<https://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/#Introduction>
- Tim Just, Chief Editor of the *US Chess Federation’s Official Rules of Chess*, 5th, 6th & 7th Editions
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VIII. FURTHER READING

- Americans with Disabilities Act Index [ada.gov/site_map.htm](https://www.ada.gov/site_map.htm) Introductions to Disability Etiquette [unitedspinal.org](https://www.unitedspinal.org)

IX. GLOSSARY

Ableism: The discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities. (*Merriam Webster*)

Accessibility: The “ability to access” and benefit from a system or entity. The design of products, devices, services, or environments for people with disabilities. This is about making things accessible to all people (whether they have a disability or not). (*My Blind Spot*)

AL: A tournament director who has complete accessibility training and is recognized by US Chess as an AL. The AL works in cooperation and coordination with an event organizer and/or Chief TD and GA to assure that the special accommodations are made for players with disabilities.

Accessible: Easy to approach, reach, enter, speak with, or use. that can be used, entered, reached, etc. obtainable; attainable (*Dictionary.com*)

Accessible Tournament Label: An event labeled as “A” accessible in advertising in a TLA or elsewhere. In order for an event to be considered accessible and be labeled as such, the event organizer and his staff must agree to use these accessibility Guidelines, to the best of their ability, to ensure that reasonable and fair accommodations are made for players with disabilities who request them. *Also referred to as an A-labeled Event*

Accommodation: A modification or adjustment to the playing environment, or the way things are usually done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy an equal and fair playing opportunity. (US Department of Education)

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act): The ADA is a wide-ranging civil rights law that prohibits, under certain circumstances, discrimination based on disability. It was signed into law on July 26, 1990. (ADA)

Adaptation: An act or a process of changing to better suit a situation. An adaptation in this context is a reasonable accommodation made to playing conditions, for a player with disabilities so a fair and legal game of chess can be played by both players. (*Merriam-Webster, Incorporated*)

Alzheimer’s: A “type of dementia that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time, becoming severe enough to interfere with daily tasks.” (Alzheimer’s Association)

American Sign Language (ASL): A visual language. With signing, the brain processes linguistic information through the eyes. The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as

facial expressions and body movements, all play important parts in conveying information. Sign language is not a universal language—each country has its own sign language, and regions have dialects, much like the many languages spoken all over the world. Like any spoken language, ASL is a language with its own unique rules of grammar and syntax. Like all languages, ASL is a living language that grows and changes over time. ASL is used predominantly in the United States and in many parts of Canada. (National Association of the Deaf)

Asthma: A chronic, incurable lung disease that causes the airways to become inflamed, making it hard to breathe. Common symptoms are coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing and chest tightness. Asthma may lead to a medical emergency and death. (Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America)

Autism Spectrum Disorder: A developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. (CDC)

Badge: To issue badges that identify those involved in accessibility roles for a given event. Badges may identify: AL, GA, PCA, Caregivers.

Best Practices: A method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives because it produces results that are superior to those achieved by other means or because it has become a standard way of doing things. (*Wikipedia*)

Bias: A prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Blind: *See Visual Impairments*

Blindness: *See Visual Impairments*

Caregiver: A player's personal support person. A Caregiver must not be an event official. Caregivers may be family members, PCA, coaches or another responsible adult. Caregivers are not provided by, nor paid for by the TO or TDs.

Certification: An official document attesting to a status or level of achievement given by US Chess.

Chief TD: The Tournament Director (or Arbiter) of record for the tournament

Cognitive Impairments: (temporary or permanent) NEED DEFINITION HERE

Deaf: *See Hearing Impairments*

Deafness: *See Hearing Impairments*

Dignified: One of the recommended qualities of an Accessible event. The others being: physical safety, comfortable, fair play.

Dignity: A state, quality or manner worthy of esteem or respect; and (by extension) self-respect. Dignity supports and promotes, and does not undermine, a person's self-respect regardless of any difference. (Canterbury Care)

Disability: A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment. (ADA National Network)

Disruptive Behaviors: Behaviors that might be related to autism, ADHD, emotional disorders, PTSD, Tourette's Syndrome

Dysgraphia: A condition of impaired letter writing by hand, that is, disabled handwriting. Impaired handwriting can interfere with learning to spell words in writing and speed of writing text. (International Dyslexia Association)

Dyslexia: Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.

Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. (International Dyslexia Association)

Effective Communication: "Communication with people with disabilities that are as effective as communication with others." (ADA)

Emergency Action Plan: A written document used to facilitate and organize Organizer, TD, player and spectator actions during in the event of an emergency, such as a fire, earthquake, storm or flood or manmade threat.

Etiquette, Disability: A set of rules or customs that control accepted behavior in particular social groups or social situations (United Spinal Association)

Fair: In accordance with the rules or standards; legitimate. Without cheating or trying to achieve unjust advantage. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

Fine Motor Abilities: Fine motor control is the coordination of muscles, bones, and nerves to produce small, exact movements. An example of fine motor control is picking up a small item with the index finger (pointer finger or forefinger) and thumb. (National Institute of Health and Human Services)

Game Assistant (GA): GA are staff or volunteers who are specifically assigned to one or more boards or players who need specific types of accommodations, throughout the tournament game.

Gross Motor Abilities: The group of motor skills (including walking, running, and throwing) that require large muscles groups to produce the major action, and require less precision than that exerted by small muscles. Most motor activities combine some elements of both fine and gross motor function. (*Medical Dictionary*)

Guidelines: The “US Chess Guidelines for Conducting Accessible and Successful Chess Event for all players.” This document.

Handicap: According to the Social Model of Disability, a handicap is a barrier, such as stairs that handicap passage by a person using a wheelchair. A disadvantage that makes achievement usually difficult.” The words “handicap” and “handicapped” are considered offensive to some.

Harassment: Unwelcome and negative conduct towards a person with a disability, that based on a negative bias against that individual’s disability. Harassment creates an environment that makes it difficult for that person to participate. See Dignified.

Hearing Sensitivity: *See Sensory Processing Disorder*

Hearing Impairment: A partial or total inability to hear, also referred to as hearing loss. A deaf person has little to no hearing. Hearing loss may occur in one or both ears. Hearing loss is diagnosed when hearing testing finds that a person is unable to hear 25 decibels in at least one ear. (*Wikipedia*)

Impairment: An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. (World Health Organization)

Impartial: Unbiased, treating all players equally; being fair and just.

Inclusion: Understanding the relationship between the way people function and how they participate in society and making sure everybody has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires. (CDC)

Individualized Strategies: Creative problem-solving strategies which take into consideration the unique impairments and needs of a person, when making accommodations for him/her.

Integrated: Non-segregated. An event that includes players of all abilities to play in the same event and same area, if possible.

Interpreter: A person who interprets, especially one who translates speech orally or into sign language. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

Living Document: A document that is continually edited and updated. Also known as an evergreen document or dynamic document. (*Wikipedia*)

Neutral: Not supporting or helping either side in a conflict, disagreement, etc.; impartial (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

Noise Sensitivity: A component of Sensory Processing Disorder and/or Autism.

Non-segregated: Integrated. An event with players of all abilities to play in the same event and same area, if possible.

Non-visible Conditions: Anxiety, epilepsy, diabetes, PTSD, panic disorder are examples.

Organizer: The person responsible for organizing the tournament (TO)

Organizer's Toolkit (OT): A resource designed and written by the Accessibility and Special Circumstances Committee to help organizers, TDs and tournament staff accomplish the accessibility goals of US Chess without putting undue financial or legal burden on them. It includes current recommended procedures, documents, checklists, tools and access to assistance and support. All tools are defined and tell when and how each may best be used. It is a living document that will be updated as more best practices are added.

Person with a Disability: A person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. (ADA National Network)

PCA: A person who reports directly to the chess player, the coach, or the family of the chess player. He may provide feeding, toilet and medical duties for that individual. PCA are not provided by, nor paid for by the TO or TDs.

Player: A person officially registered as a chess-playing participant in the tournament

Reasonable Accommodation: A modification or adjustment to the event environment, or the way things are usually done that enables a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy an equal opportunity to play a fair game

Recommendation: A possible accommodation to meet the needs of a person with disabilities

Resource: A source of supply, support or information: an available means—usually used in plural

Safety: Physical safety and freedom from being bullied. See “US Chess Guidelines on Safe Play and Conduct at US Chess National Events.”

Scribe: A person who writes chess notation for a chess player during his game.

Segregated: A non-integrated event. An event for only players without disabilities.

Sensitive Personal Identifying Information (PII): This is defined as information that if lost, compromised, or disclosed could result in substantial harm, embarrassment, inconvenience, or unfairness to an individual. (Northeastern University, 2019)

Sensory Processing Disorder: A neurophysiologic condition in which sensory input either from the environment or from one’s body is poorly detected, modulated, or interpreted and/or to which atypical responses are observed. Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is similar to a neurological “traffic jam” that prevents certain parts of the brain from receiving the information needed to interpret sensory information correctly. The senses that may be impaired are: vision, hearing, Touch, smell, taste, balance, awareness of the position and movement of the body, the ability to know if hungry, full, hot, cold or thirsty. (Star Institute for Sensory Processing Disorder)

Service Animal: A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Only dogs are recognized as service animals under titles II and III of the (ADA)

Social Model of Disability: The Social Model of Disability proposes that what makes someone disabled is not their medical condition, but the attitudes and structures of society. The social model of disability says that it is the way society is organized that disables people with health

issues or impairments. The social model of disability focuses on changes required in society. This model informs these Guidelines. (*Wikipedia*)

Special Circumstances: A circumstance or need resulting from a health condition or impairment.

Temporary Disabilities: A physical or mental disability which hampers your discharging of responsibilities for a short period of time, usually days, weeks, months, or a couple of years. (e.g., concussion, broken bone, migraine, eye conditions) (Young Marr and Associates Law Firm)

Title III of the ADA: One of the five titles of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title III of the ADA pertains to Public Accommodations (private entities). Under ADA Title III, no individual may be discriminated against on the basis of disability with regards to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation. (ADA)

Touch Sensitivity: *See Sensory Processing Disorder*

Tournament Director: A recognized, chess official working under the supervision of the Tournament Organizer or Chief TD for an event. (TD)

Tournament Organizer (TO): The person responsible for organizing the tournament

Training: Accessibility training of US Chess tournament officials and players by US Chess. This training is under development.

Undue Burden: Significant difficulty or expense. A public accommodation is not required to provide any auxiliary aid or service that would result in an undue burden. See Undue Hardship.

Undue Hardship: An organizer is not required to make an accommodation if it would impose an “undue hardship” on the operation of the employer’s business. “Undue hardship” is defined as an “action requiring significant difficulty or expense” when considered in light of a number of factors. These factors include the nature and cost of the accommodation in relation to the size, resources, nature, and structure of the employer’s operation.

Undue hardship is determined on a case-by-case basis. Where the facility making the accommodation is part of a larger entity, the structure and overall resources of the larger organization would be considered, as well as the financial and administrative relationship of the facility to the larger organization. In general, a larger employer with greater resources would be

expected to make accommodations requiring greater effort or expense than would be required of a smaller employer with fewer resources.

If an accommodation would be an undue hardship, the employer must try to identify another accommodation that will not pose such a hardship. Also, if the cost of an accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the employer, the individual with a disability should be given the option of paying that portion of the cost which would constitute an undue hardship or providing the accommodation. (ADA National Network)

Universal Design: Universal design means simply designing all products, buildings and exterior spaces to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible. Universal design is not a design style, but an orientation to design, based on the following premises:

- Disability is not a special condition of a few;
- It is ordinary and affects most of us for some part of our lives;
- If a design works well for people with disabilities, it works better for everyone;
- Usability and aesthetics are mutually compatible. (*Wikipedia*)

US Chess: United States of America Chess Federation

US Chess Laws of Chess: The official document published by US Chess that prescribes the rules used for playing chess.

Visual Impairments: A decreased ability to see to a degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means, such as glasses.

- Partially sighted: indicates some type of visual problem, with a need of person to receive special education in some cases.
- Low vision: generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although they may require adaptations in lighting or the size of print, and, sometimes, Braille.
- Myopic: unable to see distant objects clearly, commonly called near-sighted or short-sighted.
- Hyperopic: unable to see close objects clearly, commonly called far-sighted or long-sighted.

Legally blind indicates that a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye after best correction (contact lenses or glasses), or a field of vision of less than 20 degrees in the better eye. Totally blind students learn via Braille or other non-visual media. (*Wikipedia*)

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